

EXHIBIT A

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
WESTERN DIVISION

KIMBERLY HARSMAN, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

-v-

CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
MEDICAL CENTER, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:21-cv-00597-TSB

Judge Timothy S. Black

DECLARATION OF NICOLE MARTEL

I, NICOLE MARTEL, hereby state and declare as follows:

1. I am the Vice President of Benefits, Well-being, and Associate Health for Bon Secours Mercy Health ("BSMH"), the parent company of Defendants Mercy Health Cincinnati LLC; Mercy Health – Anderson Hospital LLC; Mercy Health – West Hospital LLC; Mercy Health Physicians Cincinnati LLC; and Jewish Hospital, LLC d/b/a The Jewish Hospital – Mercy Health, the entities which have been named as defendants in this action (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "Mercy Defendants"). My team responsible for creating, monitoring and implementing the BSMH Vaccination Policy. As a result of my position at BSMH and based upon documents and information maintained in the ordinary course of BSMH's business, I have firsthand knowledge of the facts stated herein.

2. An accurate and correct copy of the BSMH Vaccination Policy is attached as **Exhibit 1** ("The Policy"). The Policy was effective on September 1, 2021 and was revised on September 9, 2021 to include BSMH's policy on the COVID 19 vaccination. Also attached as **Exhibit 1** is a series of Frequently Asked Questions and answers to assist BSMH associates in

understanding the policy and the revision. The Policy provides that associates of BSMH are required to get their first COVID 19 vaccination dose by November 1, 2021 and their second dose by December 1, 2021. The Policy applies to all vaccines required for BSMH employees (such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, rubella, etc.). The Policy subjects employees who refuse to be vaccinated to progressive discipline. With respect to COVID 19, however, the sections of The Policy providing for possible suspension and termination have been suspended. At present, therefore, BSMH employees who refuse to get the COVID 19 vaccine will face discipline and will lose job benefits available to vaccinated workers, but the discipline does not include suspension and termination.

3. The Policy also provides a process under which BSMH associates may apply for an exemption from the COVID 19 vaccine for medical reasons or sincerely held religious beliefs. The exemption process opened on September 24, 2021, at which time BSMH began accepting applications. The deadline for requesting an exemption does not expire until October 15, 2021. To date, the Human Resources – Associate Health department has received only Eleven (11) exemption requests – Two (2) for medical reasons and Nine (9) for sincerely held religious beliefs. These exemptions will be reviewed by a multi-functional committee, but none of the exemptions have been decided upon as of this date. Two BSMH associates whose names have been associated with the action against the Mercy Defendants are Brittany Aldridge, who works at Mercy Clermont Hospital (which is not a Defendant), and Andrea Klopfenstein, who works at Mercy Anderson Hospital. Neither of these individuals have requested an exemption as of today.

4. BSMH does not keep vaccination information for its individual member entities in the ordinary course of business. Therefore, BSMH does not have available data on the number of associates at the Mercy Defendants who have not received the COVID 19 vaccine and who reside

in Ohio. BSMH does know, however, that as of September 22, 2021, the percentage of unvaccinated BSMH associates in the Cincinnati market is 36.8%, but this figure includes more facilities than just the Mercy Defendants and does not indicate the states of residence of these unvaccinated associates.

5. More importantly, it is my understanding that the class definition in the Complaint includes “every person” who has been “threatened, coerced, and illegally required” to get a COVID vaccine. The Mercy Defendants have no ability to identify which individuals (including any of its employees) subjectively may have felt “threatened” and “coerced” regarding the vaccine, nor do the Mercy Defendants know the states of residence for any such individual. The Mercy Defendants also do not know which individuals may ultimately choose to take the vaccine between now and the December 1, 2021 deadline. Accordingly, the Mercy Defendants have no way of knowing which individuals fall within the class definition or of calculating what percentage of those reside in Ohio or other states.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on this 27th day of September, 2021.



NICOLE MARTEL

EXHIBIT 1

Policy Title: Required Associate Immunization Program
 Approved by: Elia Stanko, Director – Associate Health & Safety Services
 Approval Date: 9/1/21
 Next Review Date: 9/1/23
 Effective Date: 9/1/21
 Policy Number: None
 Supersedes: All market associate immunization policies
 Originating Department: Associate Health & Safety Services
 Contributing Departments: Infection Prevention, Human Resources
 Manual: Associate Health Services Manual
 Section: Bon Secours Mercy Health Corporate
 Revision: 1

- I. Scope: All Bon Secours Mercy Health (BSMH) associates unless otherwise noted in collective bargaining unit agreements. It is the expectation that all non-BSMH associates, contractors, affiliates, volunteers, and students also adhere to these requirements.
- II. Policy: It is the policy of BSMH for associates and prospective associates to participate in the Associate Immunization Program requirements to ensure the health and safety of all BSMH patients, residents and associates. Associate Health Services (AHS) supports and maintains the health, wellbeing, and safety of its associates with vaccination guidelines that protect the healthcare needs of associates relevant to employment/service as required by regulatory agencies, BSMH policy, and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is the expectation that all non-BSMH associates, contractors, affiliates, volunteers, and students also adhere to these requirements.
- III. Procedure:
 1. Immunizations will be administered as part of the pre-employment process and/or as indicated during employment. Immunizations will be given per CDC guidelines and BSMH policies to include proper education (i.e., Vaccine Information Sheets) and consent.
 2. If an associates or prospective associate indicates a medical disease/illness and has been advised against having required vaccination(s) by his/her provider and/or if titers are negative, documentation from the associate's or prospective associate's primary care provider will be required. The associate's or prospective associate's documentation will be evaluated by the AHS Medical Director or his/her designee.
 3. Associates or prospective associates with sincerely held religious beliefs that object to required vaccination(s) should indicate such in the completion of the Vaccine Declination form, declaring and affirming a sincerely held religious belief prohibiting vaccinations and submit a signed form to Associate Health. An associate's or prospective associate's sincerely held religious beliefs objecting to vaccinations should remain consistent to maintain the exemption.
 4. A medically or religiously exempted associate's scope of care may be reviewed by the Associate Health Medical Director and accommodations explored if an exempted associate is assigned to departments with at-risk patient populations that includes masking at all times while in the facility and wear eye protection while in the clinical setting. The Vaccination Exemption Form and Attestation must be submitted and reviewed annually.
 5. Vaccines are provided free of charge to all BSMH associates and prospective associates and available through Occupational Health for all non-BSMH associates.

6. If associates or prospective associates within the scope of this policy are vaccinated through services outside of BSMH, proof of vaccination must be provided to Associate Health.
7. Associate Health will provide the Vaccine Information Sheet or Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) vaccination sheet at the time of vaccination.
8. The vaccines subject to this policy are as follows:

Disease/Vaccination	Procedure and Requirements
Hepatitis B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All prospective associates with potential for occupational exposure to blood and body fluids and without proof of prior vaccination are offered the Hepatitis B vaccine. (<i>Hepatitis B Immunization</i>). Hepatitis B Surface Antibody will be drawn only when the prospective associate has completed the vaccine within the past 1-2 month. If the prospective associate elects not to receive the Hepatitis B vaccine, written declination must be obtained.
Measles, Mumps and Rubella	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective associates without proof of 2 MMR vaccines will have titers drawn to determine immunity. If any titer is negative or equivocal, and the prospective associate was born in 1957 or after, then the prospective associate will receive MMR immunization as per CDC recommendations.
Varicella	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varicella titers will be drawn on all prospective associates without proof of vaccination, or proof of positive titer. If any titer is negative or equivocal, the prospective associate will receive Varicella vaccine as per CDC recommendations. If vaccine is declined for medical or religious reasons, counsel associate on post exposure work restrictions (off duty from day 8 through 21 post exposure). Prospective associates with a stated history of varicella vaccination unable to provide proof of immunization will be managed as the non-immune associate. Varicella immunization requires 2 vaccines, 4-6 weeks apart. If a varicella like rash develops, the associate must be evaluated by the medical director and/or designee to determine work status. Associates developing a varicella rash following vaccination may not work with immunosuppressed patient populations. Associates with proof of only one varicella vaccine at time of hire will receive the second booster vaccine.
Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tdap is offered to all prospective associates. Tdap is required for prospective associates hiring into Family Birthing Units, Respiratory Therapy, Emergency Departments and Bone Marrow Transplant units. If a tetanus booster is required and associate has already received Tdap, Td or TT may be used.
Influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influenza vaccine is administered in the fall of each year. Absent a granted medical or religious exemption, all BSMH associates in both clinical and nonclinical departments, as defined

	<p>under the policy statement, must be immunized against influenza each year when seasonal influenza vaccine becomes available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenza vaccine is available free of charge to all BSMH associates. • The influenza vaccination program is coordinated by Associate Health Services. • If associates within the scope of this policy are vaccinated through services outside of BSMH, proof of vaccination must be provided to person responsible for Associate Health at the worksite.
COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID vaccination requirement decisions are based on the market for which they work. • Associates who have approved medical and religious exemptions from the vaccine are required to adhere to all recommended infection prevention guideline requirements. • Medically and religiously exempted associates shall self-monitor for symptoms, stay home from work when experiencing COVID related symptoms following the organization's screening process. • Dates of vaccination and deadlines for vaccination and exemption requests will be determined by Associate Health Services and Senior Leadership when vaccine availability becomes known. • Associate Health will be responsible for submitting compliance reports to Human Resources and market leaders. • All associates must complete all COVID-19 and Influenza related computer-based learning modules each year as assigned. • If a vaccine shortage occurs, the requirement for immunization will be amended to reflect the CDC guidelines for prioritization of vaccine. • Shared Service associates will adhere to the market for which they work.

Vaccination Compliance:

Associates out of compliance with published deadlines without an approved exemption, will be subject to progressive discipline, up to and including termination. During the COVID pandemic, BSMH will temporarily suspend level 4, 5, and 6.

Level	Action
1	Interactive discussion and counseling with employee to examine potential alternatives or accommodations (COVID-19 only).
2	Written warning with one week to comply.
3	Final written warning with merit and ISS being withheld.
4	Associate placed off work on an unpaid administrative leave with one week to comply.
5	Associate furloughed without pay and four weeks to comply.

6	Terminate.
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IV. Definitions: none

V. Attachments: none

VI. Related Policies/Procedures: Guidance for Communicable Disease Management

VII. References

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<https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2021/07/acog-smfm-recommend-covid-19-vaccination-for-pregnant-individuals>

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vaccines: Recommendations of the advisory committee on immunization practices — United States, 2020–21 influenza season. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), 69(8), 1-24. Retrieved from

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Healthcare Personnel Vaccination Recommendations, www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2017.pdf (Technical content reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 2021)

Ohio Department of Health (2019). *Hepatitis prevention initiatives*. Retrieved from

<https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/Hepatitis-Prevention/hepatitis-prevention>

This policy/procedure/guideline does not establish a standard of clinical care or practice or standard of non-clinical practice to be followed in every case. The policy/procedure/guideline should guide actions with the understanding that departures may be required at times.

Bon Secours Mercy Health adopts the above policy, procedure, policy & procedure, guideline, manual / reference guide / instructions, or principle / standard / guidance document for all Bon Secours Mercy Health entities including, but not limited to, facilities doing business as Mercy Health – St. Vincent Medical Center, Mercy Children’s Hospital, Mercy Health – St. Charles Hospital, Mercy Health – St. Anne Hospital, Mercy Health – Tiffin Hospital, Mercy Health – Willard Hospital, Mercy Health – Defiance Hospital, Mercy Health Allen Hospital LLC, Mercy Health - Lorain Hospital, Mercy Health St. Elizabeth Youngstown Hospital, Mercy Health St. Joseph Warren Hospital, Mercy Health - St. Elizabeth Boardman Hospital, Mercy Health - St. Rita’s Medical Center, Mercy Health – Springfield Regional Medical Center, Mercy Health - Urbana Hospital, Mercy Health - Anderson Hospital, Mercy Health - Clermont Hospital, Mercy Health – Fairfield Hospital, Mercy Health - West Hospital, The Jewish Hospital – Mercy Health, Mercy Health - Lourdes Hospital LLC, Mercy Health – Marcum and Wallace Hospital, Chesapeake Hospital Corporation DBA Rappahannock General, Maryview Hospital, Bon Secours Richmond Community, Bon Secours Memorial Regional Medical Center, Bon Secours – St. Mary’s Hospital, St. Francis Hospital, Inc., Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center, Bon Secours Mary Immaculate Hospital, Southside Regional Medical Center, Emporia Hospital Corporation, and Bon Secours Mercy Health Franklin, LLC.

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Frequently Asked Questions Vaccine Policy – COVID-19 Vaccine

Some FAQs only apply to the markets that have a vaccination requirement. This is indicated in each question when applicable.

This document will continue to be updated. The latest additions will be in blue for quick reference.

POLICY-RELATED	
Why does Bon Secours Mercy Health have a vaccine policy that includes COVID-19 vaccination?	<p>Bon Secours Mercy Health, as a non-profit healthcare organization, has a moral and ethical responsibility to protect the health of our patients, families, associates and communities. Vaccination is the number one defense against COVID-19, preventing disease, hospitalization and death.</p> <p>For the continuing protection of patients, team members and all who enter our facilities, Bon Secours Mercy Health has made the decision to make COVID-19 vaccination a requirement of all associates as a condition of employment effective this fall in advance of the annual influenza and respiratory illness season. The fall will be a time of high risk for resurgence of COVID-19 cases in what is traditionally respiratory virus season. It is vital that we are as prepared as possible for the time when there will be many viral illnesses circulating with similar symptoms.</p> <p>The safety of our associates, patients and communities remains our first priority. We are using all the tools we have available, including masking, social distancing, appropriate use of PPE, handwashing and vaccination.</p>
How was the policy developed?	<p>Bon Secours Mercy Health leaders developed the policy by listening to the voices of our associates and experts by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting an associate listening post to understand associate thoughts, feelings and actions surrounding COVID-19 vaccine policy and implementation. 2. Convening a system collaborative and subgroups focused on policy development, operations and communications that include clinical and quality leaders, Pharmacy, Lab, Human Resources, Legal, Ethics, the Medical Group and Marketing and Communications. 3. Monitoring research on the vaccine, including research on its effectiveness to safeguard against the Delta variant. 4. Tracking trends from around the country, our communities and care sites. 5. Coordinating with federal and state organizations on appropriate industry recommendations and activities to safeguard the lives and health of patients, health care workers and communities.
Currently only the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Why are we implementing this policy now before the other vaccines are FDA approved?	<p>The FDA has approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine and is in the process of reviewing the approval application that was submitted by Moderna. Janssen/Johnson and Johnson are expected to apply for approval later this year. If you are concerned about FDA approval specifically, Pfizer vaccines will be available in every market.</p> <p>The FDA evaluated each vaccine using the same thorough review process regardless of the manufacturer. All available vaccines have been shown to be highly effective in preventing severe illness and death from COVID-19, including the Delta variant. The vaccines have been carefully studied in clinical trials and the findings have been evaluated by independent oversight groups who have found the results and safety to be valid.</p>

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<p>When does the new policy take effect?</p>	<p>Each market will adopt the system policy and determine when to require COVID-19 vaccination for all associates along with due dates for doses. Markets may require the COVID-19 vaccination in response to the local needs of their community, considering factors such as population density, vaccination adoption rates, COVID-19 cases, local health authorities and more. Markets that decide to initiate a COVID-19 vaccination requirement will communicate operational details and timing. Associates can expect to hear from their leaders regarding their requirement status.</p> <p>Once a market requires the COVID-19 vaccine, associates in that market must prove full vaccination by submitting front and back images of their vaccination card to their Associate Health Nurse or to the COVID_Data_Entry@bshsi.org email inbox.</p> <p>Please keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pfizer doses are given three weeks apart. • Moderna doses are given four weeks apart. • If you are planning to receive the single-dose Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine, please consider receiving it as early as possible to ensure supply is available, as there are no assurances additional supply will be in place before your market's deadline.
<p>What health and leave policy enhancements are available to me?</p>	<p>We're enhancing our health and leave policies in the following ways for associates who receive their COVID-19 vaccination:</p> <p>The following enhanced policy applies to all vaccinated associates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100 HSA/HRA contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applies if you became fully vaccinated in the past or if you do so in the future (retroactive and prospective) ○ Will be given to all associates who have a record of full COVID-19 vaccination <u>on file</u> with Associate Health ○ Will be given in the 2022 plan year to those who elect medical plan coverage, no action required <p>As we see the growing COVID-19 cases in our communities and embark on quickly vaccinating more associates, we are offering the following enhanced policies moving forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid Time Off for vaccine dose recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applies to those who get vaccine doses moving forward (prospective) ○ Provides one paid day off (8 hours for 0.6 or greater FTEs; 4 hours for less than 0.6 FTE) after each COVID-19 vaccine dose for recovery. Time off can be taken within 48 hours of your dose. ○ The code to use in Kronos (not deducted from the associate's PTO) will be included in a job aid about the process in the next couple of weeks. • Paid one-week elimination period before short-term disability for COVID-19 illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applies to those who get vaccine doses moving forward (prospective) ○ If fully vaccinated associates become sick with COVID-19 and require a leave of absence, the one-week elimination period (before Short Term Disability pay begins) for full-time and part-time associates will be paid, resulting in associates not needing to use one week of their PTO.
<p>Why are markets deciding when to require COVID-19 vaccination?</p>	<p>There is a system policy for COVID-19 vaccination for associates, providers, students, volunteers, contracted/agency staff and vendors.</p>

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	Markets will adopt the system policy in response to the local needs of their community, considering factors such as population density, vaccination adoption rates, COVID-19 cases, local health authorities and more.
Who does the policy apply to?	<p>All Bon Secours Mercy Health associates, providers, students, volunteers, contracted/agency staff and vendors. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote associates • Hybrid associates • Onsite associates <p>Each market will adopt the system policy and determine when to require COVID-19 vaccination for all associates along with due dates for doses.</p>
Do I need to receive the vaccine if I work from home?	For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: The requirement will apply to remote workers that physically reside in that market footprint. Market residence is determined by physical proximity to a Bon Secours Mercy Health care site. Remote associates who reside in a zip code that is within a 30-mile radius of a care site will be included in that market's footprint.
As a remote associate, how will I know if I am considered part of a market?	Specifically, if you work or live in a zip code that is within a 30-mile radius of a Bon Secours Mercy site, you are part of that market. Associates can expect to hear from their leaders regarding their requirement status.
Is the COVID-19 vaccine required for all Bon Secours Mercy Health contractors, vendors, affiliates, students and volunteers?	For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Yes. These individuals should review communications sent by their organization and have a record of their COVID-19 vaccine on file with their organization.
What happens if I do not get the COVID-19 vaccine?	<p>Each market will adopt the system policy and determine when to require COVID-19 vaccination for all associates along with due dates for doses.</p> <p>For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: If you are within a market that is requiring COVID-19 vaccination, failure to receive the COVID-19 vaccine will result in progressive discipline.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interactive discussion and education 2. Written warning with one week to comply 3. Final written warning with merit and ISS being withheld <p>Currently, Bon Secours Mercy Health is suspending levels 4, 5 and 6 for COVID-19 vaccination.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Associate placed off work on an unpaid administrative leave with one week to comply (currently suspended, not in use for COVID-19) 5. Associate furloughed without pay and four weeks to comply (currently suspended, not in use for COVID-19) 6. Termination (currently suspended, not in use for COVID-19)
Will I be terminated if I do not receive the COVID-19 vaccine?	No. At this point, associates will not be terminated if they do not get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please see the question above for details about the active stages of progressive disciplinary action in markets that are requiring.

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Will Bon Secours Mercy Health require COVID-19 booster shots too?	When more information is available about booster shots, we will share it with you. Bon Secours Mercy Health will continue to follow the data and CDC recommendations to make updates to our policy as needed.
Can I apply for an exemption for medical contraindication or sincerely held religious belief?	For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Yes. Exemptions will be considered for medical contraindications and sincerely held religious beliefs. Only people in markets who have a requirement should submit exemptions at this time. If your market is not currently requiring COVID-19 vaccination, please do not submit an exemption form.
Can I choose to be tested weekly for COVID-19 instead of getting the vaccine?	No. If your market is requiring COVID-19 vaccination, you must receive an exemption for medical contraindication or sincerely held religious belief to forgo receiving the vaccine.
Will masks and entry screening still be required if everyone gets vaccinated?	Facilities will continue screening and masking protocols as needed. Masking and physical distancing are required in all our facilities (clinical and non-clinical), regardless of vaccination status. We will be reviewing CDC recommendations as well as case counts and community rates closely.
Will we discontinue remote work (“work from home”) if everyone gets vaccinated?	At this time, there are no plans to change our remote work schedules.
Will Bon Secours Mercy Health or my insurance cover adverse side effects to the vaccine?	While unlikely, complications related to vaccination may be considered by workers' compensation.
Is my vaccination status being shared with my supervisor?	Prior to COVID-19 vaccination requirement, supervisors do not know who receives or declines the vaccine. In markets that require the COVID-19 vaccination, and consistent with our flu vaccine protocols, supervisors will receive compliance reports to assist with vaccine compliance.
What impact does this new requirement have on annual flu vaccines?	There is no impact on the annual influenza vaccine requirement. We will continue to require annual flu vaccinations for associates.
How should I respond if a patient asks me if I've been vaccinated?	You are not required to share this information with patients. You can use these talking points below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You can trust that we continue to put the health and safety of our patients first.” • “All sites are following safety protocols recommended by the CDC, including masking, PPE and vaccination to continue to provide a safe environment for patients.” • “These protocols are extremely effective in preventing transmission of COVID-19 – so you can feel safe at this site and all of our sites.”
Does it matter which vaccine I receive? Will I still be considered vaccinated as long as I	Any vaccine available, whether FDA-authorized or FDA-approved, will count for the Bon Secours Mercy Health vaccine requirement. For vaccines given in two doses, both doses must be administered by the deadline.

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completed the full dose for that vaccine?	
What if multiple people in our department get the vaccine near the same time and need to take days off after getting the vaccine?	Please discuss this with your manager.
If I'm vaccinated/unvaccinated, do I need to follow PPE guidance?	Everyone must follow universal masking and appropriate PPE guidance, regardless of their vaccination status.
How can I schedule a vaccine?	<p>You can schedule their free vaccination in one of many ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting BSMH Central • Calling Associate Services Center at 1-877-692-7780 (Select option 8, then option 3) • Reaching out to an on-site Associate Health nurse • Receiving a vaccination at any outside location that offers it, including local retail stores like CVS and Walgreens (be sure to submit proof to Associate Health).
How can I submit proof of my COVID-19 vaccination?	<p>Associates who should submit their records of vaccination include those who received the vaccine through an outside source (such as CVS, Walgreens, a state or local health department) or primary care provider (whether BSMH or not). Even if you have a BSMH provider, you will need to submit record of vaccination due to privacy policies. If you were vaccinated through a BSMH associate-facing clinic, your records are already on file.</p> <p>You can submit proof of vaccination by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropping off a copy of your COVID-19 vaccination record card to your on-site Associate Health nurse. Include the date(s) of vaccination(s), your full name, Workday ID and date of birth. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending a scan or image of both sides of your COVID-19 vaccination record card to Associate Health at COVID_Data_Entry@bshsi.org. Include the date(s) of vaccination(s), your full name, Workday ID and date of birth.
What are the deadlines for compliance before corrective action begins?	<p>For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Each market will set its deadlines for receiving the vaccine doses. This will include one deadline for the first dose, and another deadline for the second dose (if a two-dose regimen is available). As markets announce their deadlines, details will be available on BSMH Central.</p>

EXEMPTION-RELATED

What kinds of conditions qualify for medical contraindication exemptions?	<p>For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Only people in markets who have a requirement should submit exemptions at this time. If your market is not currently requiring COVID-19 vaccination, please do not submit an exemption form.</p> <p>Medical conditions for which the vaccine is not recommended are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe allergy to any component of the vaccine • Contraindications due to medical reasons • Previous severe allergic reaction to product of vaccine • History of Guillain-Barre syndrome
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	Requests for medical contraindication exemptions for other reasons will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
How do I apply for an exemption for medical contraindication or sincerely held religious belief?	<p>For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Only people in markets who have a requirement should submit exemptions at this time. If your market is not currently requiring COVID-19 vaccination, please do not submit an exemption form.</p> <p>Required associates interested in applying for an exemption for medical contraindication or sincerely held religious belief can complete the form available on the Associate Health page on BSMH Central and submit the form to Associate Health at COVID_Data_Entry@bshsi.org. Requests should be made as soon as possible. Associates who request an exemption and are denied will still have to meet the original market deadline.</p> <p>Exemptions for associates in markets not requiring COVID-19 vaccination will not be considered.</p>
What is the deadline to request an exemption for medical contraindication or sincerely held religious belief?	For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: All requests must be submitted by the same deadline set by your market for COVID-19 vaccinations. Market leadership will communicate details, including deadlines.
If I received an exemption and then test positive for COVID-19, what process should I follow?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have COVID-19 symptoms, you are required to call the Nurse Access Line at 1-877-692-7780, selecting option 8. This screening process will determine the need to test, and work clearance will follow current recommended guidance from the CDC and Bon Secours Mercy Health COVID-19 screening protocols. • Self-monitor for symptoms, stay home from work when experiencing COVID-related symptoms following the organization's screening process. • Standard and Transmission Based Precautions, including hand hygiene, should be practiced as directed by Infection Prevention policy.
Do I need to submit the COVID exemption request if I already have one for the flu?	<p>For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Yes, if your market is requiring COVID-19 vaccination, this is a separate process and needs to be submitted separately.</p> <p>Only people in markets who have a requirement should submit exemptions at this time. If your market is not currently requiring COVID-19 vaccination, please do not submit an exemption form.</p>
If I am currently on medical leave, when do I need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?	For markets that have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement: Associates on medical leave who are in a market that is requiring COVID-19 vaccination will need to receive at least their first COVID-19 vaccine dose prior to returning to work.
Am I able to ask for a medical deferment if I am currently pregnant, breastfeeding, undergoing fertility treatments or trying to conceive?	There is now robust evidence that the vaccines are safe in pregnancy and in lactating women. To date more than 139,000 pregnant women have self-reported within the CDC-v-safe program and the types and frequency of side effects do not differ from those in the general population. In a separate evaluation any adverse outcomes of completed pregnancies such as congenital abnormalities were not different than what is expected in the general pregnancy population. Since pregnancy is a risk factor for complications (including death) of COVID-19, both the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend pregnant and breastfeeding people receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Pregnant people are at increased risk for severe illness with COVID-19 and can receive a COVID-19 vaccine to reduce their risk.

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Anyone interested in applying for an exemption for medical contraindication or sincerely held religious belief can contact Associate Health at COVID_Data_Entry@bshsi.org.

COVERAGE-RELATED

If I experience a fever as a reaction to the vaccine, will I be able to come into work if I feel like I can?

Associates can expect to have common side effects such as injection site redness, pain and swelling, fatigue, fever, chills, headache, nausea, muscle pain and joint pain. Side effects have been similar to the flu vaccine.

The RN Access Line will screen your symptoms to determine if they are vaccine related or if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

We continue to screen employees upon entry to our facilities and do not want anyone with a fever of 100°F or greater to be working in a facility. This is important to monitor because the symptoms of vaccine reactions are many of the same symptoms as COVID-19 and other contagious illnesses.

Those with a fever of 100° F or greater in the 2-3 days immediately following the vaccine will need to stay home until they no longer have a fever and are not taking fever-reducing medication. If fever or other symptoms persist longer than 48 hours, please call the RN Access Line at 1-877-692-7780, selecting option 8, to be evaluated. Cough, loss of taste or smell, or shortness of breath have not been reported after the vaccine and should prompt a call to the Associate Health as well.

VACCINE-RELATED

Is the COVID-19 vaccine necessary?

COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool to help stop the epidemic. Prevention measures such as wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. Public health officials and medical experts believe vaccination is an important step in helping to protect children too young to be vaccinated, adults who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons and communities. In addition, the more people who are vaccinated, the better our chance to slow the development of new and potentially more dangerous variants.

How well does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

Available evidence suggests that the vaccines are all highly effective in preventing severe illness and death from COVID-19, including the Delta variant. Protection against confirmed infection and mild to moderate illness seems to be lower for the Beta, Gamma and Delta variants compared to the original strain and Alpha variant. The vaccine's effectiveness against variants is being monitored.

For vaccinated individuals, the COVID-19 vaccine is:

- **65–95% effective against symptomatic infection**
- **89% effective against hospitalization**

It is more difficult to study effectiveness against asymptomatic infection, but preliminary data suggests the Moderna vaccine is 67% effective and the J&J/Janssen vaccine 74% effective against asymptomatic infection [\[source\]](#).

Is the vaccine free?

Yes, the vaccine is free to you. There are no out-of-pocket costs for getting vaccinated. Your insurance may be billed, but the cost cannot be passed on to you.

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<p>I have already had COVID and have a natural immunity. Why do I need to get a COVID vaccination?</p>	<p>Having prior COVID-19 infection usually does not generate immunity as strong as that generated after vaccination. Numerous studies have shown that mRNA vaccines are more effective at immunizing against COVID-19 as well as its variants versus natural acquisition of the virus.</p> <p>There is substantial evidence that the vaccine provides additional protection for people who have already had the virus. The added response generated by your immune system to the vaccine strengthens the response from the infection and makes it last longer as well. Therefore, vaccination provides the best protection.</p> <p>There have been limited observational studies regarding the duration of protection individuals receive from having COVID-19. More studies will provide a better understanding of the duration of protection of infection versus the vaccine. BSMH clinical experts are further investigating the research on this topic and will share more information as it becomes available.</p>
<p>Doesn't it take years, even decades, to understand the long-term effects of a vaccine? COVID-19 vaccines have not been around long enough to understand the effects of receiving it.</p>	<p>Messenger RNA vaccines, also called mRNA vaccines, are the first COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States. mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. To trigger an immune response, many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies. This is not the case with mRNA vaccines. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.</p> <p>Researchers have been studying and working with mRNA vaccines for decades. Interest has grown in these vaccines because they can be developed in a laboratory using readily available materials. This means the process can be standardized and scaled up, making vaccine development faster than traditional methods of making vaccines. This new technology has enabled a short development timeline for several of the COVID-19 vaccines.</p>
<p>I thought we had reached herd immunity, so why do I need to get the vaccine?</p>	<p>We currently have not met herd community in the United States. In fact, the transmission rate is currently increasing, mainly due to the Delta variant.</p>
<p>I received one dose of Pfizer or Moderna. Do I need to get the second dose, too?</p>	<p>Yes. To fulfill the vaccine requirement, you must have two doses of Pfizer or Moderna (same kind as the first dose) by the vaccination deadline set by your market.</p>
<p>I had a bad reaction after my first dose. Do I still need to get the second dose?</p>	<p>If you had a reaction to the first dose beyond the typical side effects, reach out to your provider to discuss your previous reaction to determine if you should apply for a medical exemption.</p>
<p>I was vaccinated at a Bon Secours Mercy Health associate-facing clinic. Do I need to do anything to prove my vaccination status?</p>	<p>If you received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccination (or one dose, if you received J&J) from a Bon Secours Mercy Health associate-facing clinic, we have record of your vaccination and we require no additional action from you. However, if you received either dose (or both doses) from a Bon Secours Mercy Health community-facing clinic, a Bon Secours Mercy Health provider or an outside entity, we do require a photo image of your vaccination card sent to COVID_Data_Entry@bshsi.org or given to your on-site Associate Health Nurse.</p>

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<p>I have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Should I get the vaccine?</p>	<p>Yes, you should still be vaccinated. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, you should wait to be vaccinated until you are outside of the isolation period and recovered (this is usually 10 days from symptom onset, have no fever for at least 24 hours AND improvement in other symptoms. Contact your Associate Health Nurse for more information.</p>
<p>I lost the card I received when I got my vaccine. What should I do?</p>	<p>If you've lost your vaccine card, contact your state health department's Immunization Information System (IIS). State health departments will either email or mail a copy of your vaccination card, although it may take one to two weeks.</p> <p>There are also opt-in services such as v-safe or VaxText that save your vaccination information. So, if you misplace your card and need to show proof, you can access the applications.</p>
<p>If I am young and otherwise healthy, why should I get the vaccine?</p>	<p>The COVID vaccines have undergone extensive research by now — as much as any other vaccine currently available. As a health care ministry, we make a commitment to the safety of our patients and communities, and that means taking appropriate measures to protect ourselves from getting sick and, by extension, from transmitting illness to more vulnerable people. The disease is currently seeing a surge among the younger population and those who are unvaccinated. We must do our part to keep our population safe.</p>
<p>If I get COVID-19 after my first COVID-19 vaccine dose but before my second dose, should I still get my second dose?</p>	<p>Vaccination of persons with known current COVID-19 infection should be delayed until the person has recovered from the acute illness (if the person had symptoms) and the specific CDC criteria have been met for them to discontinue isolation. This recommendation applies to persons who develop COVID-19 infection before receiving any vaccine doses as well as those who develop COVID-19 infection after the first dose but before receipt of the second dose.</p>
<p>Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?</p>	<p>The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and are also under the most intense safety monitoring in the U.S. The CDC has a real-time database for reporting and monitoring vaccine reactions and provides updates on serious adverse events reported to their monitoring system.</p> <p>The COVID-19 vaccines were authorized for emergency use quickly. This was made possible because scientists from around the world were focused on the same problem, at the same time, with unprecedented financial support. All three currently available vaccines completed phase 3 clinical trials. More than 110,000 people have participated in this research, which established that the vaccines met strict quality, safety and efficacy guidelines.</p> <p>Since the vaccines became available, they have been used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Continued monitoring is critical for revealing side effects that may not have been seen in clinical trials, and in the U.S. we have multiple vaccine safety monitoring systems in place.</p> <p>Between December 14, 2020 and August 9, 2021, more than 351 million doses of the vaccine were administered in the U.S. (source). This now provides us with data from more than 165 million people.</p> <p>Serious problems (severe reactions) have been very rare, occurring in about 2-5 per 1 million vaccines (source). For comparison, the measles vaccine severe reaction rate is 1 in 1 million doses (source); the flu vaccine severe reaction rate is 1 in 500,000 (source).</p> <p>It's important to remember that reactions to a vaccine such as pain at the injection site and low-grade fever are not the same as a severe reaction or adverse events. It takes time for medical experts to determine whether vaccination contributed to an adverse event and our understanding of vaccine safety continues to evolve as data is analyzed.</p>

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Will the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?	<p>No. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain SARS-CoV-2 and will not give you COVID-19. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. You may have symptoms like a fever after you get any vaccine. This is normal and a sign that your immune system is learning how to recognize and fight the virus.</p>
Did the COVID-19 vaccines undergo testing in clinical trials?	<p>Yes. More than 110,000 patients have participated in initial clinical trials of the authorized vaccines. Clinical trials are the primary way researchers determine if a new treatment is safe and effective. The FDA utilized data from the clinical trials and determined the vaccines were ready to be authorized for emergency use authorization (EUA). The clinical trials for these vaccines are ongoing and continue to enroll more participants from previously unstudied populations.</p>
Have clinical trial participants or others who have been vaccinated experienced adverse events or side effects from the vaccine?	<p>In clinical trials, the vaccine has been found to be well-tolerated. Serious side effects have been very rare. Most adverse events were mild or moderate in severity, and short-lived. Noted adverse effects were injection site redness, pain and swelling, fatigue, fever, chills, headache, nausea, muscle pain and joint pain. Side effects have been similar to the flu vaccine. Side effects were more pronounced following the second shot.</p> <p>There is a remote chance that the vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the vaccine. These may not be all of the possible side effects of the vaccine as it is still being studied in clinical trials.</p> <p>In women younger than 50 years old, there is a rare risk of blood clots with low platelets after vaccination with the J&J/Janssen vaccine.</p> <p>Some people experience mild, temporary symptoms after vaccination that are a normal part of the body's natural immune response.</p>
Are there special considerations for women of child-bearing age? What if I'm pregnant, thinking of becoming pregnant or breastfeeding?	<p>The CDC recommends that people who are pregnant, thinking of becoming pregnant or breastfeeding get vaccinated. So do the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine. Evidence about COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy is growing, and safety is highly monitored. According to the CDC, women of child-bearing age should consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy reduces your risk of infection. • Pregnant people are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. While the chances for these severe health effects are low, pregnant people with COVID-19 have an increased risk of severe illness, including illness resulting in hospitalization, intensive care admission, mechanical ventilation or death. Additionally, they might be at an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth or preeclampsia. • Early data from safety reporting systems was analyzed to gather information about COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, and no safety concerns for the pregnant people or their babies were found. A different report looked specifically at pregnant people who were vaccinated before 20 weeks of pregnancy, and scientists did not find an increased risk of miscarriage. Studies in pregnant people are underway and being planned, and the vaccine manufacturers are following outcomes in people in the clinical trials who became pregnant. • Antibodies made after a pregnant person received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine were found in umbilical cord blood, so it's possible that vaccination during pregnancy might help protect babies against COVID-19. More study is needed.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A conversation between the patient and their physician may assist with decisions regarding the use of a mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, though a conversation with a healthcare provider is not required prior to vaccination. • Side effects can occur with COVID-19 vaccine use in pregnant people, similar to those expected among non-pregnant people. Pregnant people who experience fever following vaccination may be counseled to take acetaminophen to reduce fever. • There is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in men or women. • There is no recommendation for routine pregnancy testing before receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine. • Those who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination. • Breastfeeding individuals might pass on protection to their baby. Recent reports have shown that breastfeeding people who received an mRNA vaccine have antibodies in their breastmilk. There is no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating people or the effects of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines on the breastfed infant or milk production/excretion. mRNA vaccines are not thought to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant. <p>For more information visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html</p>
<p>Are there any long-term side effects from taking the COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>Long-term side effects of the vaccines are unknown, but research is ongoing. At this point, no long-term safety issues have been detected. As more people get vaccinated and as time passes, additional data will be available. The CDC and medical professionals will be continuously reporting and reviewing vaccine safety and will act on new safety concerns as necessary.</p> <p>One way in which ongoing safety of the COVID-19 vaccines will be monitored is via a program called v-safe. The CDC states “V-safe is a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Through v-safe, you can quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Depending on your answers, someone from CDC may call to check on you and get more information. And v-safe will remind you to get your second COVID-19 vaccine dose if you need one.</p> <p>Your participation in CDC’s v-safe makes a difference — it helps keep COVID-19 vaccines safe.</p> <p>You can register via the link below or by scanning the QR code.</p> <p>https://vsafe.cdc.gov/</p> 